

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 35

BY SENATOR MIZELL

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Transportation and Development to determine which of its assets are available for broadband internet lines and to implement a "Dig Once" policy allowing broadband internet operators to install cable in the ground more economically.

WHEREAS, there is a digital divide between demographics and regions that have access to modern technology and communications and those that do not; and

WHEREAS, data from the United States Department of Transportation's Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office indicates that the average cost of deploying fiber-optic cable is about twenty-seven thousand dollars per mile; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Highway Administration recently reported that up to ninety percent of the cost to install broadband cable is tied to the process of actually digging up roadways and not to the actual installation of the fiber lines; and

WHEREAS, this expense inhibits the deployment of fiber-optic cable in more isolated areas, as well as those with lower population densities or unfavorable terrain, contributing to the service gap between urban and rural residents; and

WHEREAS, this discrepancy is clearly shown in United States Department of Transportation data, when between 2001 and 2013, per-mile deployment costs ranged between six thousand six hundred dollars and two hundred sixty-seven thousand dollars per mile; and

WHEREAS, the incredibly expensive cost to install high-speed fiber-optic infrastructures is the most formidable barrier to bridging the digital divide; and

WHEREAS, a "Dig Once" policy is aimed at cost cutting and seeks to save money by minimizing the amount of excavation required to install infrastructure and facilitating access to public rights-of-way; and

WHEREAS, a "Dig Once" policy attempts to lower the cost of broadband deployment by providing internet companies access to state-owned rights-of-way and is complemented by the opportunity to install conduit during road construction, or by allowing qualified broadband deployments to be installed during road construction projects; and

WHEREAS, some states and cities have promoted the idea of future-proofing public highway rights-of-way during road construction projects; and

WHEREAS, this concept is generally referred to as "Dig Once" and mandates notification by the Department of Transportation and Development of the opportunity to install protective, flexible plastic pipes for broadband conduits that may be used to more easily install fiber-optic communications cable; and

WHEREAS, the "Dig Once" policy effectively eliminates the need to dig up recently-paved roads to expand broadband infrastructure, significantly reducing the cost to provide internet access to under served communities.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Transportation and Development to determine which of its assets are available for installation of broadband internet lines and to implement a "Dig Once" policy to allow a broadband internet operator to install cable in the ground more economically.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that no later than March 1, 2021, that the Department of Transportation and Development shall prepare a written report of its findings and recommendations to the House of Representatives and to the Senate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Transportation and Development.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES